England [Agr. - Agric.]
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AN IMPARTIAL VIEW OF ENGLISH AGRICULTURE,

FROM PERMITTING THE

EXPORTATION of CORN,

In the Year 1663, to the Preſent TIME.

THE SECOND EDITION CORRECTED.

LONDON:

Printed for G. KEARSLY, oppoſite St. Martin's Church, in Ludgate-Street. 1766.

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IMPARTIAL VIEW, &c.

NO fact is more ſelf-evident than that this country is entirely dependant on trade, both for internal felicity and external conſequence. The vaſt ſums that have for theſe ſeventy years paſt been borrowed and funded, are incumbrances proportioned to, and dependant on your property; if your ſupplied ſtaple commodities fail, the nation in a collective view muſt become Bankrupts, the individuals, Beggars.

The wiſe prognoſticators in the reign of Queen Anne, fixed this country's ruin, when the national debt became an hundred millions, it now far exceeds that ſum, and yet the nation remains in full credit. The people of thoſe times were right in principle, but did not ſufficiently extend their ideas; had not our trade greatly encreaſed, and of courſe our riches, the preſent national debt would have been inſupportable; but as our trade has encreaſed with the ſame haſty ſtrides as the debt, the one pays the other; the national trade being treble, and of courſe the riches of individuals, the country is no more diſtreſſed with a treble debt, than if both had remained at a ſtand.

In proportion to the increaſe of trade; the additional ſupplies extracted from it; the riches gained by the ſubject; the employ it finds for the induſtrious poor; it becomes of more importance to the ſtate, and ſhould not be incumbered or reſtrained, but on the moſt mature conſideration.

The following ſheets are not dictated by prejudice or paſſion, but are the cool reflections of a perſon wholly diſintereſted, who only means to ſet before the public, from hiſtory and experience, the advantages they have received from encouraging the exportation of corn, and the imminent danger

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of ſtopping a trade, to which they have been beholden for plenty, little leſs than a century.

The export-corn trade, is, I apprehend, the moſt valuable and beneficial trade we at preſent poſſeſs. It is all neat produce of this country, being different from almoſt every other unalloyed with any foreign commodity. It is an univerſal proviſion for the induſtrious poor all over the kingdom; whereas, manufactures collect infinite numbers into particular places, impolitically over-filling this, and other great towns, while the country in general is in danger of being uninhabited. The growing ſuch large quantities for foreign markets, ſecure us in a great meaſure from a poſſibility of famine, to which this country was in former times equally liable with her neighbours. It is a very conſiderable encouragement to the navy. It contributes to relieve the landholder, who by being incumbered with all your general taxes, and a particular addition of four ſhillings on his rent-roll, is perhaps the moſt oppreſſed of any man in the kingdom. It is a certain trade, not like moſt manufactures dependant on whim and faſhion, but affected; only by the ſeaſons, and as they will continue precarious in foreign countries, ſo we may depend on their continuing to want the ſame quantity of grain; and of courſe, the ſame large ſums of money will by this means be brought into the kingdom.

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The great advantages arising to this country from our export-corn trade, cannot be ſo clearly illuſtrated as by referring the reader to former times, and ſetting before him the various ſtatutes, by which the agriculture of this kingdom has been brought to the preſent perfection. The inexperience of our anceſtors made them hope to procure plenty, by prohibiting the exportation of corn, except by ſpecial licence from the King: this, by preventing the ſale, diſcouraged the growth of grain, ſo that it operated diametrically oppoſite to their intention. No more being grown than for home conſumption, an unfavourable ſeaſon made a ſcarcity, two, a famine; by which means, wheat has often been five pounds a quarter, and ſometimes not to be had for money. The folly of expecting plenty, by confining the ſale of your grain among yourſelves, does not appear to have been the leaſt underſtood, 'till about the middle of the reign of Charles the ſecond, in the year 1663, when we find an act paſt, intitled, "An act for the encouragement of trade." The preamble to which ſtrongly marks, that they had found their miſtake, and meant to make plenty at home, by eſtabliſhing a foreign ſale, it is. "*Foraſmuch as the encou-couragement of tillage ought to be in an eſpecial manner re-*

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garded and endeavoured; and the ſhureſt and effectualeſt means of promoting and advancing any trade, occupation or myſtery, being by RENDERING IT PROFITABLE TO THE USERS *thereof; and great quantities of land within this kingdom for the preſent lying in a manner waſte, and yielding little, which might thereby be improved to conſiderable profit and advantage (if ſufficient encouragement were given to the laying out of coſt and labour on the ſame) and thereby much more corn produced, great numbers of people, horſes and cattle, imployed, and other land rendered more valuable.*" By this act, wheat at forty-eight Shillings, Barley at twenty-eight the quarter, &c. is permitted to be exported as other merchandize, but incumbered with a rate granted by the 12th of Charles the 2d. C. 4. of tonnage and poundage, which was 20 s. on each quarter of wheat, and ten on barley, &c. With this very heavy addition, it was highly improbable that the trade ſhould ſucceed, becauſe the price was ſo great as to render it unſaleable at foreign markets, except in abſolute famine. But even the uſe of this incumbered priviledge was ſo apparent to the people of that time, that in 1670, another act paſt "*for the improvement of tillage, and the breed of cattle,*" in which the exportation of corn is allowed, although the prices thereof exceed the former rates, and leſſens the cuſtom and

poundage

poundage. The uſe of the former ſtatute in relation to grain, induced them to attempt encouraging the breed of cattle on the ſame principle, by permitting a foreign trade; and horſes, mares, and geldings exported, pay by this act only five ſhillings each; and an ox, ſteer, cow, or heifer, only one ſhilling, though in the year 1660, only ten years before, by the act of tonnage and poundage, a ſtone-horſe paid 66 l. 13 s. 4d. a mare, 126 l. 13 s. 4 d. a gelding, 20 l. and an ox, 6l. 13s. 4d. By theſe means, agriculture was promoted, grain became more plentiful, and cattle of every kind encreaſed; and this great advantage ſo evidently aroſe from the extending the ſale of corn and cattle into other countries, that in the year 1688, the firſt of Wm. and Mary, C. 12. the act paſt, that I will venture to call, the MAGNA CHARTA of Engliſh agriculture, by which it has been promoted to a degree not to have been conceived; and on this ſtatute being unviolated, depends its future welfare; it is intitled, "*An act for encouraging the exportation of corn.*" The preamble to which is, *Foraſmuch as it hath been found by* EXPERIENCE *that the exportation of corn and grain into foreign parts, when the price thereof is at* A LOW RATE *in this kingdom, hath been of great advantage not only to the owners of land, but to the trade of this kingdom in general, be it therefore, &c.*"

&c." By this ſtatute, the encouragement of the exportation is compleated, by affixing a bounty to the export, when corn is at a LOW RATE, viz, five ſhillings for wheat, when 48 s. per quarter or under: 3s. 6d. for Rye, when 32 s. or under; and 2s. 6d. for barley, or malt, when 24s. or under.

Theſe ſtatutes, as far as they relate to grain, have ſucceeded to the utmoſt that could be wiſhed, or expected; for, although every other neceſſary of life is become twice, or thrice, theprice of that time, yet corn is on the average not half the price. If the wiſdom of former parliaments had not promoted the exportation, and by encreaſing the conſumption reduced the price, it is very reaſonable to conclude, that grain would have roſe in proportion to all other country commodities, ſuch as beef, mutton, pork, butter, cheeſe, milk, &c. which have doubled within theſe twenty-five years, and are treble the price they were in 1688, when wheat at FORTY-EIGHT SHILLINGS is called a LOW PRICE, which at preſent is reckoned extravagantly dear. If agriculture had not been promoted by eſtabliſhing the exportation on advantageous terms to the farmer, grain muſt have roſe in the ſame proportion as other things; and inſtead of the average price of wheat being

being thirty ſhillings, only half the price of that time; it muſt have been at leaſt ſix pounds, which is no more than double.

The preſent clamour for ſtopping the exportation, is neither founded on reaſon or juſtice, and can only proceed from the intereſted and the uninformed. The two great conſumers of grain in this metropolis, are the brewer and the diſtiller; to a great brewer, the riſe of one ſhilling a quarter on malt, is perhaps a 1000 pounds, a year. That the generality of mankind are more attentive to their own intereſt than to the public's, I believe, is a fact that cannot be denied; that the trader is particularly ſo, has been a maxim in all countries, and in all ages, from the firſt dawn of commerce to this day: It is therefore not extraordinary that a ſet of men ſo deeply concerned, ſhould try every art to ſink the price of grain; though at the expence of agriculture, the poor farmer, and the general intereſt of the country. The Borough of Southwark, if I am not miſinformed, is repreſented by a BREWER and a DISTILLER; and the Borough of Southwark are the firſt ſet of people that have taken on them to determine for the legiſlature, how to act in this moſt important affair.

Clamour

Clamour once raiſed by intereſt, is always zealouſly purſued by ignorance. The daily papers being open for the reception of the crude ideas of every man that has pen and ink; on the firſt hint that grain is dear, you find them filled with declamations againſt the exportation of corn. No one enters into, or even knows, either the origin, or uſe of the export, but all unite to bawl in your ears, that the poor will be ſtarved: "that the poor will be ſtarved," are words that affect the multitude, and people living in peace and plenty, are ſoon perſuaded that famine is near at hand. I love and honour the citizens of London, and think the whole nation much beholden to them for their ſpirited oppoſition to the tyranny and oppreſſion of ſome late Miniſters; but cannot compliment them ſo far, as to ſay, that I think them in the leaſt degree judges of this general queſtion, of ſtopping or ſuffering the exportation; on which, in my opinion, in a great meaſure depends, the proſperity, or ruin of Engliſh agriculture. Though politics flouriſh in Cheapſide, no judgment can be there formed of huſbandry; ſo that their ideas of procuring plenty by a temporary confinement of the preſent ſtock of grain, are founded on the credit of the intereſted eſſays in the Gazetteer, and other newspapers; which have too often induced them to interfere in this very important affair; without being informed

of that unanſwerable fact, that grain is cheaper at preſent by a third, than it was a century ago. I hope they will for the future make ſome inquiries into the ſubject, or remain ſilent.

When a ſet of people have a cauſe that they are conſcious will not bear examination, and which they wiſh you to believe implicitly on their repreſentation, they do not apply to your reaſon, but endeavour to intereſt your humanity and good nature: So the brewer, when he wants the exportation ſtopped, tells you, of the ſufferings of the poor from a ſmall addition to the price of bread; but this ſame brewer, not long ſince, to add to his enormous profits, raiſed porter a half-penny a quart, and then told you, the labourer got more than he could ſpend without being idle. Let any rational man impartially conſider the exportation as the promoter of agriculture, and he will find, that no ſet of people are more intereſted in its ſucceſs, than the body of poor throughout the whole kingdom. However numerous our manufacturers, yet there are more than ten times the number employed and maintained by huſbandry. At the very leaſt, every hundred acres ſupports two families, beſides the infinite number of artizans, whoſe whole dependance for bread is on the proſperity of our corn trade;

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ſuch as plough-makers, wheelwrights, blackſmiths, collar-makers, &c. and every country trader. Such a meaſure may give bread, at a lower rate, for a ſmall time, to the inhabitants of London, but will probably deprive the country poor of their bread for their whole lives.

The ſtopping the exportation of corn at this time, when wheat is but thirty-eight, or forty ſhillings, will not only be a meaſure contrary to ſound policy, but NATIONAL FAITH. Trade has been found by experience to flouriſh in proportion to liberty: trade never ſucceeds, but where the trader has the greateſt confidence in government, both for having his property protected, and his general and eſtabliſhed privileges, on which his commerce is dependant, unvariable. The farmers of this country well know, that they grow much more grain than can poſſibly be conſumed by ourſelves, the diſtillery, ſtarch-making, &c. and yet they every year incloſe and break up more ground: why is this done? ſurely it cannot be ſuppoſed, that the farmer means to treat the the brewers, diſtillers, and London manufacturers with grain, at half the prime coſt, and to be the cool ſpec-

tator of his own and family's ruin, to ſerve others; no! he does it on the faith of parliament, by which he is promiſed, that, till wheat exceeds forty-eight ſhillings the quarter, and barley and malt twenty-four ſhillings, he ſhall not only have the liberty of ſending his grain to foreign markets, but ſhall be enabled ſo to do, by a bounty of five ſhillings on the former, and two and ſix-pence on the latter. Has this ſtatute been repealed? No! Has it been explained, like modern half-formed ſtatutes, and the farmer told, that his preſent privileges were ſubject to the controul of the more powerful brewer? No! Is this ſtatute, a ſuperficial, inconſiderate law of yeſterday? No! but it is a law of ſeventy-eight years ſtanding, and in that time, found to be of the greateſt benefit to the whole kingdom; and is now only clamoured againſt, becauſe it is not underſtood. If this law is violated, can the farmer, for the future, confide even in the laws of his country, or conceive himſelf the object of their protection, when he ſees the export of wheat ſtopt, tho' the price is only forty ſhillings, notwithſtanding the law promiſes him a bounty, till it exceeds forty-eight ſhillings.

The better to illuſtrate the ſubject, let us ſuppoſe that theſe artifices ſucceed, and that exportation of corn is ſtopt for three years; which is the time, I am told, the parties mean, or at leaſt, did deſign to aſk. I ſhould be glad to know, why they take it for granted, that, in conſequence of this law, corn will ſink in price, becauſe if we may, from former events, form a judgment of future, we might ſuppoſe the contrary. In the middle of February, 1757, the parliament in obedience to popular clamour, ſtopped the exportation of corn, and the diſtillery: at that time, wheat was about forty-ſix ſhillings; before the end of the month, it roſe to fifty ſhillings; in March, it was fifty-ſix ſhillings; in April, ſixty ſhillings; in May and June, ſixty-three ſhillings; and ſo continued, till a plentiful harveſt reduced it to about fifty; at which price it remained the whole year. It afterwards appeared, by the great quantities of old grain brought to market, that, ſo far from a real ſcarcity, there had been, during the whole year, more grain in the country, than was neceſſary both for the exportation, and the diſtillery; and that this act had operated quite different to the intention, and expectation of the ſhallow politicians that procured it. The farmer

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naturally concluded, that a meaſure ſo deſtructive to this moſt valuable trade, would not have been taken, but in caſe of abſolute neceſſity: from ſtopping the exportation, he inferred, there muſt be a great ſcarcity; he ſaw grain advance daily; he, like every other trader, is diſpoſed to make the moſt of his goods, and therefore he kept his grain from market. The common people, who had been taught to believe, as they are at preſent, that grain would become a drug, and the price fall as ſoon as the export was ſtopped, finding the exact contrary effect, and that wheat, which before the act they could have bought for five-ſhillings and ſix-pence the buſhel, was roſe to eight ſhillings, became exceeding riotous, going into ſeveral markets, and deſtroying, or ſeizing the corn. This ſo intimidated many well-meaning farmers, who were otherwiſe diſpoſed to ſell, that they would not venture their grain out of their own yards. Another very diſcouraging circumſtance, that then happened, and always will happen, when the export and the diſtilling are ſtopped, is, that the markets are not a certain ſale, and that grain of an inferior kind, may lie a long time without being diſpoſed of. At moſt great markets, there is as much corn each day offered, as would ſerve the neighbour-

bourhood for months. There are alſo great quantities, that from being ſmutty, or damaged, are not ſaleable, except to the diſtiller, exporter, &c. becauſe we are come to that degree of luxury, that a London chimney-ſweeper will not eat any but the fineſt bread; ſo that the exported grain, is either the refuſe, or the ſuperfluity of an over-ſtocked market, which a diſtreſſed farmer diſpoſes of at a lower rate, to pay land-tax, or exigencies; but when he is not almoſt certain of diſpoſing of his grain, it cannot be conceived, he will be at the hazard and expence of drawing it to market. By theſe means, the ſtopping the export has, and may again contribute to the riſe of grain.

I will now ſuppoſe the contrary, and that ſtopping the export and the diſtillery, will make ſuch a glut of grain, as to reduce the price conſiderably: let me aſk theſe zealots, upon what principle it is done; do they impeach the farmer of getting exorbitant profit? if they do, I would have them enter into the merits, and examine laſt year's harveſt. I allow, that there was as great plenty of wheat as has been for many years; but there was a great deficiency of barley, oats,

oats, beans, &c. the dryneſs of the ſeaſon occaſioned a ſcarcity of hay and ſtraw. Every man that has the leaſt idea of farming, knows that wheat ought to be ſown only once in ſix years on any land; that out of thoſe ſix years, two years the land lies fallow; ſo that the wheat is only a quarter of the land ſowed, and the ſixth part of the land rented; if three parts fail, the fourth muſt pay the deficiency; and in this light, wheat at 40s. muſt be allowed exceedingly cheap; a three, or ſix months prohibition, is only confining the grain for that time to the barn: but if the artifices of the brewer and diſtiller ſucceed ſo far as to obtain a prohibition, of the export for three years, let any impartial man ſay, whether the natural conſequence will not be, that the farmer will grow leſs grain, becauſe he cannot be expected to grow what he is not permitted to ſell; the conſequence of ſuch a ſtep may be a temporary glut, but will in the future be found the occaſion of the greateſt ſcarcity, if not an abſolute famine. A farmer can no more be expected to grow grain without an apparent, fair profit, and certain conſumption, than a London-trader, to ſend his uſual quantity of goods to America, tho' he knows they will not receive them; only to ſerve the Britiſh manufactures. The conſequence of the Americans refuſing your goods is, the merchants ſend none; the conſequence

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of not permitting the farmer to ſell all he grows will be, he will grow leſs: the ſuperficial reaſoner will ſay, that when the export is again permitted, he will grow his uſual quantity; but this I will venture to deny; for it cannot be ſuppoſed, he will let his land lye waſte: ſo when he finds no encouragement for grain, he will convert it into paſture, which is at preſent, much more advantageous both to the landlord and tenant, but deſtructive to the poor; becauſe, a farm of five hundred acres of paſture does not require ſo many labourers as fifty acres of tillage; add to this, that paſture employs no horſes, uſes no implements of huſbandry, affords no aſſiſtance to poor families, by gleaning, no employ for women or children, by weeding and cocking, no double pay, and excellent food at harveſt. The fatal conſequence of turning too much into paſture, has been experienced by the inhabitants of Leiceſter, where, ſince their incloſing, and laying down their ground, the poor are ſtarving; and Leiceſter town, once the ſeat of plenty, paid laſt year more for grain than any town in the adjacent counties. The pretence that the turning more land into paſture will make greater plenty of meat, butter, &c. is alſo falſe in principle; becauſe, with the diminution of culture, live ſtock muſt alſo diminiſh. The rich meads of Lincolnſhire, &c. have, and ever will be,

imployed in fattening of cattle; but the ſtate of paſture in moſt counties is quite different: for it affords no food for cattle in dry ſummers, and very little in winter; by which means, tillage is abſolutely neceſſary for their ſupport; the ſtraw and chaff of the exported grain is left in the farmer's yard, and enables him to encreaſe his ſtock of cows, ſheep, &c. If tillage is diſcouraged, ſheep will not be kept in ſeveral places, where at preſent there are great quantities, becauſe, in many countries, theſe are of no advantage to the farmer, except for folding his ground; and as on poor ſwade they do not grow better, he often at the end of a ſeaſon, ſells his ſtock at leſs than prime coſt. The great encreaſe of ſheep in ſome counties, is owing to the culture of turnips; and in proportion as you diminiſh your ploughed land, ſo the growth of turnips muſt decreaſe, and of courſe, fewer ſheep can be bred or kept.

From theſe particulars, and hiſtorical deductions, I may venture to conclude, that neither the intereſt of the farmer, or the country in general, is the leaſt attended to by the opponents of the exportation; nor is it at all to be wondered at, when we find, that the oppoſition comes from the ſhopkeepers in London and Southwark. The farmer, like every other trader, muſt have a ſufficient profit, or he

he cannot go on long; the working his ground is equally expenſive in ſcarce and plentiful years; in both he pays the ſame rent, keeps the ſame number of horſes, has as many ſervants and labourers, is burthened with the ſame heavy taxes, and muſt provide himſelf and family with the neceſſaries of life; by the difference of ſeaſons, his grounds at one time produces twice the quantity they do at another; in a favourable year, an acre of wheat may contain four quarters, in a bad one, not two; what is the poor farmer to do? is he to ſell at the ſame price whether he has much or little? The expecting any thing ſo ſtrange, is more like Quixots than London tradeſmen: however, I believe, the farmer may agree, that if the corporation of London, or the inhabitants of Southwark, can produce a ſingle member of theirs that act on this principle, and prefers ruin to advancing his goods in dear times, for fear of diſtreſſing the poor, he may venture to let this noble ſpirited tradeſman, when found, fix the price of his grain; but till they act on theſe principles, they ſhould let the farmer have ſome return for his toil and expence.

I ſhall only mention one more particular, that I think evidently marks, that this clamour is raiſed to ſerve the private ends of a few, and not from a zeal for the benefit of the nation in general, or the welfare of the poor in particular; which is, that the people who endeavour to frighten you with the apprehenſion, that the poor will be ſtarved by a quartern loaf being ſeven-pence, neither take notice of, or propoſe a remedy, for the preſent extravagant price of other proviſions. A Frenchman, and moſt other foreigners, are principally beholden to bread for their ſubſiſtence; but the Engliſh eat great quantities of meat, and therefore, a farthing a pound advance on beef, and mutton, is of as much importance to a family, as two-pence on a quartern loaf, allowing a quartern loaf a day to a family of eight, and a pound of meat each; yet meat has roſe within every man's memory a penny, or three half-pence, without any clamour, little complaint, and no deſperate remedies tried, or indeed any applied, but the liberty of importing cattle from Ireland. Meat, butter, &c. are doubled in price within theſe twenty-five years; Grain not half the average price it was one hundred years ago. If we look back to ancient chronicles, we ſhall find a ſtill greater diſproportion. In the year, 1315, in the 8th of Edward the 2d, wheat ſold at 40 s. a quarter,

a quarter, and the year before, by the price of provisions ſettled by parliament, a graſs-fed ox ſold for 16s; ſo that wheat was at the price it now is, and an ox at leaſt twenty times cheaper. In 1317, early in the year, wheat was four pounds a quarter. In 1586, 29th of Eliz. wheat in meal, was at London 3l. 4s. a quarter. In 1594, the ſame. In 1596, wheat meal, at London, 4l. a quarter‡. In 1597, 5l. 4s. a quarter*. In 1648, wheat was 4l. 5s. a quarter, and the next year, 4l. †.

Let all theſe ſtated facts be well conſidered, and the grateful man will rather be diſpoſed to fall down on his knees, and thank GOD for the great plenty we have been bleſſed with, in compariſon to our anceſtors, than to try hazardous experiments, in hopes of reducing the price ſtill lower, which may ruin our export trade, and of courſe, Engliſh agriculture; for they have riſen together, and neither can flouriſh without the other's aid. The impartial man muſt ſee that the exportation has been for many years the ſupport of the Farmer; that the poor labourer depends

‡ By comparing the different value of money in thoſe times, and theſe, the reduction of the price of grain is almoſt inconceivable.

* For particulars, ſee Engliſh chronicle, by Edm. How, Gent. and hiſtory of wheat, &c. by John Penkethman.

† See Bp. of Ely's account of the price of Grain; by which it appears, that grain, before the exportation was encouraged, was ſeldom leſs than forty-ſhillings, and that even ſince, it has oftener been above than under.

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on it for bread; that, ſo far from being ſubject to famine, we have ſince been always bleſſed with plenty; that the exportation is ſo interwoven with the general ſyſtem of huſbandry, that an infringement of this privilege may endanger the whole; and therefore no impartial man will ſay, that it ſhould be ſtopped with wheat at only FORTY-SHILLINGS, when the law PROMISES EVEN *the* BOUNTY till FORTY-EIGHT-SHILLINGS. The utmoſt advantage to be expected is a reduction of a few ſhillings, and that probaby obtained by the loſs of the moſt valuable, and generally uſeful trade, we at preſent poſſeſs; perhaps the only trade we are not already in the moſt imminent danger of loſing. A trade that draws from foreigners, little leſs than a million a year; which is diffuſed all over the country among a ſet of induſtrious, valuable people, who are excluded from almoſt every other ſpecies of commerce, tho' contributing in a much larger degree to the exigencies of government, than traders, or manufacturers. Great ſufferers by war, and by the late cruel, unfeeling, Scottiſh Miniſtry, unrelieved, even in their MIGHTY peace.

FINIS.